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IN THE  
NATIONAL CONVENTION  
OF  
PARIS;  
AND OTHER  
AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS  
RESPECTING  
RELIGION IN FRANCE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

MUCH difference of opinion, it is well known, has arisen both in parliament and out of doors, respecting the sentiments of the French government and the French nation in matters of religion. Some think that they are atheists; some that they are only deists; and others again contend that they have merely cast off the gross superstitions of their former religion; that all the impieties and blasphemies we hear of are nothing more than the extravagancies of a few wild hot-headed individuals (such as are to be met with in all large bodies of men) and that they are entirely disapproved and reprobated by the greater and better part of all ranks of men among them. In order to clear up these doubts, and decide, if possible, this very interesting question, it was thought that the best and fairest way would be to collect together in a short com-

## INTRODUCTION.

pass the most material decrees, speeches, letters, &c. produced in the National Convention, the municipalities and other public meetings; and recorded in the most authentic publications of the day. This has been done with as much impartiality as possible, and the result is here submitted without any comment or observation to the judgment of the public.



THE following is a speech made in the National Convention at Paris, on Friday, the 14th of December, 1792, in a debate on the subject of establishing public schools for the education of youth, by Citizen Dupont, a member of considerable weight. Translated from *Le Moniteur* of Sunday, the 16th of December, 1792.

“ What! thrones are overturned! sceptres broken! kings expire, and yet the altars of God remain! [*Here is a murmur from some members; and the Abbé Ichon demands, that the person speaking may be brought to order.*] Tyrants, in outrage to nature, continue to burn an impious incense on those altars! [*Some murmurs arise, but they are lost in the applauses from the assembly.*] The thrones, that have been reversed, have left these altars naked, unsupported, and tottering. A single breath of enlightened reason will now

be sufficient to make them disappear. And if humanity is under obligation to the French nation for the first of these benefits, the fall of kings; can it be doubted, but that the French people, now sovereign, will be wise enough, in like manner, to overthrow those altars, and *those idols*, to which those kings have hitherto made them subject?—*Nature and Reason*, these ought to be the *gods of men*! These are my gods! [*Here the Abbé Audrien cried out, "there is no bearing this;" and rushed out of the assembly. A great laugh!*] Admire *nature*, cultivate *reason*. And you, legislators, if you desire that the French people should be happy, make haste to propagate these principles, and to teach them in your primary schools, instead of those fanatical principles which have hitherto been taught. The tyranny of kings was confined to make their people miserable in this life; but those other tyrants, the priests, extend their dominion into another, of which they have no other idea than of eternal punishments; a doctrine which some men have hitherto had the good-nature to believe. But the moment of the catastrophe is come, all these prejudices must fall at the same time. We must destroy them, or they will us. For myself! I honestly avow to the Convention,

*I am an Atheist ! [Here there is some noise and tumult—but a great number of members cry out ; “ What is that to us ? you are an honest man ” .]*

But I defy a single individual, among the twenty-four millions of Frenchmen, to make against me any well-grounded reproach. I doubt whether the Christians, or the Catholics, of which the last speaker, and those of his opinion, have been talking to us, can make the same challenge. *[Great applauses.]* There is another consideration. Paris has had great losses. It has been deprived of the commerce of luxury ; of that factitious splendor which was found at courts, and invited strangers hither. Well ! We must repair those losses. Let me then represent to you the times, that are fast approaching, when our philosophers, whose names are celebrated throughout Europe, Petion, Syeyes, Condorcet, and others, furrounded in our Pantheon, as the Greek philosophers were at Athens, with a crowd of disciples coming from all parts of Europe, walking like the Peripatetics, and teaching ; this man, the system of the universe, and developing the progress of all human knowledge ; that, perfecting the social system, and shewing in our decree of the 17th of June, 1789, the seeds of the insurrections of the 14th of July, and the 10th of August, and of all those insurrections, which are

spreading with such rapidity throughout Europe ; so that these young strangers, on their return to their respective countries, may spread the same lights, and may operate, *for the happiness of mankind, similar revolutions throughout the world.*

*[Numberless applauses arose, almost throughout the whole assembly and in the galleries.]*

Paris, January 31, 1793.

Citizen Manuel has addressed to the National Convention the following letter on public education.

“ The Laws of France,” he observes, “ being entirely new, the manners of her inhabitants should be new likewise. It is therefore necessary to change every thing, to abolish all ancient prejudices.

“ The priests of a Republic should consist in the magistrates; its *Evangelists*, in the law. *All religion, except that of the law, is to be scouted ; since, by establishing beside the Sovereignty itself a Celestial power, it opposes the representatives of God to the representatives of the people ; and, being less tractable to your decrees than to the canons of the councils of Divines, gives to the church the irresistible rights of a Convention.*

“ It is time, Citizens, to renew the face of the earth ; this is a second creation. *Every religion*



*whatever ought therefore to be driven from the schools, into which our youth should not be permitted to enter until the age of sixteen, to the end that their reason may not suffer a surprise.*

“ Instead of the sabbath, we ought to have weekly a Civic Fete, a day of rest and festivity in which commerce itself shall be at a stand.”

*Paris, February 11, 1793.*

The day before yesterday the Section *Butte des Moulins* denounced to the municipal officers certain assemblies which performed divine service in the parochial church of *St. Roch*. An attention to these religious functions, the section observed, might produce a fatal schism between those who laboured for the public weal; and these zealous Catholics had besides rendered themselves *highly culpable* by raising voluntary subscriptions for the cultivation of divine worship.

NATIONAL CONVENTION, *Ap. 19, 1793.*

The committee proposed as an VIIIth article, to declare every man free in the exercise of his religious worship.

On this article Vergniaud called for the previous question, as it ranked among the social duties *an object entirely foreign to them.*

Danton supported this motion, and said, let us

at length prove to the world that we are cured of the *mania* of priests.

*This observation was applauded, and the article was rejected.*

Letter from Fouché to Chaumette, read by him in the Municipality of Paris, *October 17, 1798.*

“ In the name of the French nation. The representative of the people with the department of the *Centre* and the *West*, considering that the French can acknowledge no other privileged signs except the law, justice, and liberty; no other worship except that of universal morality; no other doctrine except that of national sovereignty and omnipotence; considering that, if at the moment when the Republic solemnly declared that she allows an equal protection to the exercise of the worships of every religion, it was lawful for every sectary to establish on the public squares, on the roads, in the streets, the tokens of their respective sects, to celebrate there their religious ceremonies, confusion and disorders would ensue therefrom in society, resolves as follows:

- I. All the worships of the different religions cannot be exercised but in their respective temples.
- II. The republic not acknowledging any general or privileged worship, all the religious tokens

upon the roads, squares, and all public places in general, shall be destroyed.

III. It is forbidden, under pain of imprisonment, to all ministers and priests to appear clad in their religious vestments any where but in their temples.

IV. In every municipality, all the deceased citizens, of what sect soever, shall be carried twenty-four hours after their decease, or forty-eight hours in case of sudden death, to the place of common burial, covered with a pall, on which shall be depicted *Sleep*; accompanied by a public officer, surrounded by their friends clad in mourning, and by a detachment of their brothers in arms.

V. The common place where the ashes shall repose, shall be remote from every dwelling, planted with trees, under the shade of which a statue shall be raised, representing *Sleep*. All other signs or tokens shall be destroyed.

VI. On the gate of this field, consecrated by a religious respect to the manes of the dead, shall be read this inscription:—" *Death is an everlasting sleep!*"

VII. All those who, after their death, shall be judged by the citizens of the commonalities to have well merited of their country, shall have on their tomb a stone with garlands of oak.



VIII. The present resolution shall be printed, and stuck up in all the extent of the department, addressed to all the districts, which shall transmit it to all the councils-general of the commons, and to the rectors, who shall be responsible in case of non-execution.

(Signed) "FOUCHE."

*Nevers, October 19.*

The council referred this resolution to the commission charged with making a report respecting the births and burials on the 20th of October.

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION, Oct. 21, 1793.

The Procureur Syndic of the district of *Tonnerre* wrote, that many of the communities of that district had resolved, that no more masses should be celebrated, nor vespers, or other offices on Sunday, *which they no longer acknowledged*. They have substituted, as a day of rest, the 10th day of each decade. The commons of *Tonnerre* had unanimously resolved a civic feast for the last day of the current decade.

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION, Oct. 22, 1793.

A citizen, deputed from the popular society at *Moulin*, was admitted to the bar, and said, "Citizens Legislators, I come to announce the tri-



umph of reason over fanaticism throughout the department of *L'Allier*. The bishop of *Moulin* now officiates with a pike and a red cap, instead of the mitre and crozier. The dying are comforted, and not frightened. Upon the gate of church-yard one reads this inscription—“*Death is but an everlasting sleep.*”

The people are convinced, that if the fall of kings is the foundation of republics, the fall of priests can alone cement liberty. Aristocracy is expiring in our department; the traitors, the malevolent and suspected persons, are under arrest.”

The orator concluded with depositing upon the altar of the country a golden cross enriched with precious stones, and several marks of gold and silver extracted from the statues of the *ci-devant* saints. *Applauded, and the offer accepted.*

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION, Oct. 24, 1793.

Dumont, one of the national commissioners, wrote to the convention, “That in order to destroy fanaticism he arrests all priests who *dare* to celebrate *Sunday* or holidays. He adds, that he means to include all those *monsters* called priests in his general list of *proscription*, and that he has made several captures of those infamous bigots.”—*Moniteur*, October, 26, 1793.

## NATIONAL CONVENTION, Nov. 7, 1793.

A letter was read, signed *Parent*, rector of Boissere la Bertand, dated Nov. 4.

The writer of this letter owns that religion is a mere imposture, and that renouncing its tenets, he means to preach henceforth only the principles of republican morality.

The convention after a short debate between Serjeant, Leonard, Bourdon, and Thuriot, decree honourable mention of Parent's letter.

The day concludes with a speech from Julien of Toulouse, a member of the Convention, and a minister of the protestant church: he says, "For twenty years I have exercised the functions of a protestant minister; I declare that I renounce them for ever. In every religion there is more or less of quackery [*great applauses*]. It is glorious to be able to make this declaration under the auspices of reason, of philosophy, and of that sublime constitution which has already overturned the errors of superstition and monarchy in France, and which now prepares a similar fate for all foreign tyrannies. I declare that I will no longer enter into any other temple than the sanctuary of the laws; that I will acknowledge no other God than Liberty, no other worship than that of my country, no other gospel than the Republican Constitution: such is my profession of moral and

political faith. I shall cease to be a minister of the protestant church; but I shall think myself equally bound to advise, exhort, and instruct my fellow-citizens in the Jacobin Clubs, and in the public squares; there I will preach, and there I will inspire them with the love of liberty and equality: I will soon lay upon the table my letters of ordination, of which I hope you will have the kindness to make an *Auto da Fé*." The letters of the national commissioners are full of the same zeal: Lequinio and Laignelot, deputies of the Convention, write to the assembly, from Rochefort on the 2d of the same month, in these words: "We pass from miracle to miracle: soon our only regret will be that no more miracles remain to be performed. Eight priests of the Catholic persuasion, and one minister of the Protestant church unfrocked themselves on the day of the last decade in presence of the whole people in the *Temple of Truth*, heretoforth called the parish church of this town: they abjured the errors which they had so long taught, and they swore henceforth to teach nothing but the great principles of morality, and of *sound philosophy*; to preach against all tyrannies political and religious, and at length to display the light of reason to mankind. The whole people, *protestants and catholics*, swore to forget their ancient superstition. In this town



there will no longer exist more than one mode of preaching morality; there will exist but one temple, that of truth: but one repository for the remains of the dead, *whose resurrection has been perpetually preached by superstition for the torment of the living.* The Rights of Man and several other Constitutional Laws are to be substituted in the room of the mysterious ornaments of the churches". National Convention, Nov. 7, 1793. Moniteur, Nov. 9, 1793.

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION.

*Sitting of the 8th Nov. 1794.*

The President informed the Convention that the constituted authorities of Paris, preceded by the bishop of Paris, and his clergy, requested to be admitted to the bar.

The deputation then presented the following address to the Convention.

" The department of Paris, the municipality, a deputation from the department of La Nièvre, and numbers from the popular societies, present themselves before you, accompanied by citizens, who request to be *regenerated and to become men.* The bishop of the department of Paris, and his clergy come to divest themselves of their functions. This grand example will be followed by their colleagues. *Thus, in a short time, the French*



*republic will have no other worship but that of eternal and immutable truth. A worship, which under your auspices will soon be universal.*

The bishop of Paris, Gobet, then addressed the Convention in the subsequent manner: " Born a plebeian, I had early in life an attachment to the principles of liberty and equality. Summoned by the will of the people to the constituent assembly, I did not wait for the declaration of the Rights of Man in order to acknowledge the sovereignty of the people. For a long period my opinions have been guided by this grand regulator. I only obeyed the will of the people when I accepted the office which they conferred on me. Now that the revolution marches onward with a firm step to a blissful goal; *Now that liberty ought to be the only worship* because the people will it, I come to declare, that from this day I renounce the Catholic form of worship. My Vicars agree with me in opinion, and we surrender our letters of priesthood".

The petitioners were admitted below the bar, and Gobet received the fraternal embrace from the president.

Lindet, Bishop of the department of Eure; Gay Vernon, Bishop of La haulte Vierre; the Bishop of another department; Coupé, Rector of Vangirard; Villers, Rector of Nantes, imitated

citizen Gobet, and renounced their sacerdotal functions, amidst the applauses of the whole assembly.

*An address, dated 30th of October from the Curate of Villos de Luchon, and read in the National Convention, November the 9th 1793, says:*

“Legislators, I come to make a public confession, and to declare my repentance. Why should we spare established prejudices? For my part, I believe, *that no religion in any country in the world is founded in truth.* I believe that all the various religions in the world are descended from the same parents, *they are all the daughters of pride and ignorance.* I believe that heaven is nothing more than the happiness which attends virtue on earth. I render this solemn homage to truth. Universal morality is become my gospel; and henceforth I mean to draw my texts from thence alone, and to preach in no other cause than that of liberty, and of my country. Fanaticism will not now listen to me, but by habits of truth men will be converted to reason; and we may hope that soon priests of all religions will comprehend the *triumph of philosophy*, and of the liberty of nations, and acknowledge the difference between the functions of priesthood, and the duties of honesty and virtue”.

On hearing this address Thuriot says": It is not sufficient to enlighten one part of Europe; this is a case, in which it might be right to soften the rigour of the French laws respecting foreigners: *it should be the duty of the Convention to assume the honourable office of diffusing truth over the whole earth*": and upon his motion it is decreed that all renunciations of the functions of religion shall be translated into all foreign languages.—*Moniteur, November 10th 1793.*

### NATIONAL CONVENTION,

*Sunday, Nov. 10, 1793.*

The members, freed from the great apprehensions they were under of very rigorous measures proposed in the two preceding debates, relaxed themselves very agreeably in hearing the Section of the *Sans Culottes* declare to them at the bar, that they will no longer have priests among them; and that they required the total suppression of the salaries hitherto paid to the ministers of religious worship.

This agreeable petition was followed by a still more satisfactory spectacle. A numerous procession filed off in the hall, accompanied by national music. Surrounded by them appeared a young woman of the finest figure, arrayed in the robes of liberty, and seated in a chair orna-



mented with leaves in festoons : she was placed opposite the President, and Chaumette said :  
 “ Fanaticism has abandoned the place of truth ; squint-eyed, it could not bear the brilliant light. The people of Paris have taken possession of the temple, which they have regenerated ; the Gothic arches, which till this day have resounded with lies, now echo the accents of truth. There all the people uttered ardent wishes for the prosperity of the republic ; there they offered thanks to their legislators for the benefits they received from them. You see it, we have not taken for our festivals inanimate idols ; it is a *chef d'œuvre* of nature whom we have arrayed in the habit of liberty : its sacred image has inflamed all hearts. The people have but one cry—*No more altars, no more priests, no other god but the god of nature.* We, their magistrates, we accompany them from the temple of Truth to the temple of Laws, to celebrate a new Liberty, and to request that the *ci-devant* church of *Notre Dame* be changed into a temple consecrated to Reason and Truth.”

This proposal, converted into a motion, was immediately decreed ; and the Convention afterwards declared that the people of Paris, on this day, *continued to deserve well of the Country.*

The Goddess then seated herself by the side of the President, who gave her a fraternal embrace.



The secretaries presented themselves to share the same bliss; every one was eager to sacrifice to the new Divinity, whom so many salutations did not in the least disconcert.

During the ceremony, *the orphans of the country*, pupils of Leonard Burdon (one of the members), sung a hymn to Reason, composed by citizen Moline. The National music played afterwards Goffee's hymn to Liberty. *The Convention then mixed with the people, to celebrate the feast of Reason, in her new temple.*

November 10.

Bishop Massieu, one of the representatives of the people at the army of the Ardennes, wrote, that he renounced his *sacerdotal functions*, and that he was going to marry the daughter of the mayor of Gevet.

*An immense number of letters* from the departments, announced the resignation of priests, who listened to the voice of reason; and several commons sent the silver of their churches for the wants of the country.

The central committee of the popular societies and sections of Paris, petitioned for the suppression of all salaries hitherto paid to the clergy, in whom, said the petitioners, the people no longer believed.

Chabot thought that all the commons of the republic should follow the fine example which was shewn to them by the commons of Paris; but he hoped that this wish might be suffered to acquire maturity, and that for the present the petition of the central committee be inserted in the minutes, in order to prove *how agreeable it was to the Convention.*

November 1793.

Several members of the section of *Unité* announced, that the Republicans of that section were going to file off through the hall of the Convention. They entered amidst the sound of martial music, and spoke as follows: "It is not surprising that reason should triumph over error, and that the people should gain a victory over priestcraft; but it is astonishing, that for eighteen centuries men should have considered as divine, a religion celebrated only by the evils it has occasioned to mankind, and by the crimes it has caused to be committed." The orator here declared, that the section of Unity would in future acknowledge no other worship than that of Reason: "We swear, said the orator (*all his followers here stretching out their arms towards the president*), to acknowledge no other worship than that of Reason, no other duty than Liberty, no other priests than our magistrates, and to maintain till death the unity

and indivisibility of the Republic." Yes (said the voices from *every part of the hall*) we take the same oath. [*Loud applauses.*]

NATIONAL CONVENTION, Nov. 11, 1793.

"We have long," said Syefes, "wished to see reason triumph over superstition and fanaticism. The day has at length arrived, and I rejoice at it as one of the greatest blessings that could happen to the French Republic. Though I have for many years laid aside the ecclesiastical character; let me, however, be permitted to declare at present, *that I know no other worship than that of Liberty and Equality, and no other religion than the love of mankind and my country.* I have lived a victim of superstition, but I was never its instrument. No one can say he was ever deceived by me; and many are indebted to me for the truth, at the moment when my reason was disengaged from the fatal prejudices by which it was fettered. *The energy of insurrection entered into my heart; since that period I have been retained in my sacerdotal chains by the same force which retained other free souls in chains.* These were all destroyed in the day of the Revolution. I have been known only by my efforts for liberty and equality. It was as a plebeian, a deputy of the people, and not as a priest, for I was then



no longer one, that I was called to the National Assembly. I cannot, like many of my colleagues, deliver to you the papers or titles of my former state. For a long time they have not been in existence. I have no resignation to give in to you, because I have no ecclesiastical employment; but I have still an offering to make to my country, that of an annuity of 10,000 livres, which the law gave me, as an indemnification for my former benefices. Permit me to deposit on your table my former renunciation of that pension."

*Paris, November 12, 1793.*

A grand festival, dedicated to *Reason and Truth*, was yesterday celebrated in the *ci devant* cathedral of Paris. In the middle of this church was erected a mount, and on it a very plain temple, the *facade* of which bore the following inscription: *A la Philosophie*. Before the gate of this temple were placed the Busts of the most celebrated Philosophers. The *Torch of Truth* was in the summit of the mount upon the *Altar of Reason*, spreading light. *The Convention and all the constituted authorities assisted at the ceremony*

Two rows of young girls, dressed in white, each wearing a crown of oak leaves, crossed before the Altar of REASON, at the sound of Re-



publican music; each of the girls inclined before the torch, and ascended the summit of the mountain. LIBERTY then came out of the temple of philosophy towards a throne made of grass, to receive the homage of the Republicans of both sexes, who sung an hymn in her praise, extending their arms at the same time towards her. Liberty descended afterwards to return to the temple, and on re-entering it, she turned about, casting a look of benevolence on her friends. When she got in, every one expressed, with enthusiasm the sensations which the goddess excited in them by songs of joy, and they swore never to cease to be faithful to her. See *Moniteur*, Nov. 13, 1793, and *Courier Universel*, Nov. 12, 1793.

Bourdon has, in a speech at the Jacobins, established this great principle, "That all religious worship is equal; since, out of regard to prepossession, it is necessary that it should exist. He has, in consequence, proposed to discontinue the salaries of all the priests, who continue to deceive the people with their dogmas and mysteries, as if it were *possible* to honour the SUPREME BEING more than by being *good Republicans!*

## NATIONAL CONVENTION,

*Tuesday, November 14, concluded.*

David presented to the Convention the picture of Marat, and in a long speech made the *apotheosis* of the friend of the people, which he concluded by moving that the honours of the Pantheon be granted to Marat.

The honours of the Pantheon were decreed with applause.

On the proposition of Sergeant, the committee of public instruction has been charged incessantly to make a report respecting Mirabeau.

A priest stated to the Convention his late marriage with the female citizen Barbier, who in a late national fete represented the *goddeſs* of *Liberty*. The same priest solicited the Convention to permit his bride to assume the name of *Liberty*, Order of the day.

One of the secretaries read a letter from Aubry, a French officer, and son to the Olympia Degouges, lately guillotined, *in which he speaks with great disrespect of his late mother, and complains of having been cashiered only because that woman had been his mother.* He attested his civism and bravery on all occasions in the field.

On the motion of Merlin, this letter was referred to the minister at war.

Several letters were read, written by priests who abjured their functions.

On the motion of Romme, the Convention decreed, that all the letters of priesthood be collected, in order to be publicly burnt.

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION, Nov. 17, 1793.

Anacharfis Cloots did homage to the Convention of his work upon *the Certainty of the Proofs of Mahometanism*. "It belongs to the Convention," added Cloots, "to repair an outrage committed upon philosophy by the legislative assembly, which, on the Christian observations of the bishop of Calvados, of *guillotined memory* adjourned the reception of one of my philosophical productions.

"It is now become an acknowledged truth, that the adversaries of religion have well deserved of mankind. On this account I demand that a statue be erected to the first abjuring priest in the Temple of Reason. It will be sufficient to name him, to obtain a favourable decree of the National Convention. It is the intrepid, generous and exemplary John Melier, rector of Estrepigny, in Champaign, whose philosophical testament spread desolation in the Sarbonne, and among all those sects who worship Christ. The memory of that honest man, branded with infamy under the an-



cient government, ought to be restored in the reign of Nature.

"Citizens colleagues, you will honourably receive my two propositions, because the archbishop of Paris and bishop of Calvados are no longer at the order of the day."

The offer and propositions of Cloots were referred to the committee charged with drawing up the act of accusation against Offelin, and adopted.

Nov. 19, 1793.

The representatives of the people at Lyons, write, that fanaticism is expiring there. A grand fete had been celebrated, at which the people assisted in a mass; an Abs dressed in pontifical habits, was the hero of the piece; with the stole round his neck, and the mitre on his head, he acted the part of the abbé Lamourette.

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION,

Tuesday, Nov. 19, continued.

Couturier, one of the representatives of the people, wrote from Estampes, that the priests have agreed that they were only mountebanks and quacks; that every where the citizens *se Décatholisent, pour se Republicaniser*.

Dumont wrote to the same purport, from the department of La Somme in Picardy, and sent

similar effects. A great number of the commons have sent the ornaments of the churches.

### NATIONAL CONVENTION,

*Wednesday, November 20, continued.*

A deputation from the department of Cantal being introduced to the bar, Hebrard, their speaker, said, "The citizens of Cantal have sent us to you, to renew the oath which they have taken to maintain the Republic in its unity and independence, or to bury themselves under its ruins. The zeal of my fellow citizens for Liberty, has preserved them from those perfidious insinuations which have misled so many departments. On the cry that Liberty was in danger, the inhabitants of Cantal marched in a body against the Aristocrats, Fanatics and Counter-Revolutionists, who infested the neighbouring departments. A central committee of safety, and a revolutionary army, have been established in Cantal: suspected persons, in short, all the Messieurs have been arrested. One thing was wanting to the Revolution: our department has been eager to give an example of *philosophy*; we have suppressed priests and their worship; *THE ETERNAL will have among us no other temples than our hearts, no other worship than acts of civism and examples of virtue.*"

COMMONS OF PARIS,

*Monday, November 25, 1793.*

“ I require, said Chaumet, “ that the people of Paris declare, that they acknowledge no other worship than that of Truth and Reason ;” in consequence of which, the council of the commons decreed ;

1st, That all churches or temples, of whatsoever religion or worship, existing in Paris, should be instantly shut.

2dly, That for every tumult that shall take place in Paris on account of religion, the priests or the ministers of that religion shall be personally responsible.

3dly, Every individual who shall seek for the opening of a church or temple, shall be arrested as a suspicious person.

4thly, The revolutionary committees shall be requested to watch all priests.

5thly, The convention shall be required to pass a decree, importing, that the priests shall not exercise any public function. *Moniteur, Nov. 26, 1793.*

*Lyons, Nov. 25, 1793.*

“ All kind of religious worship is abolished. The churches are changed into stables and barracks. Joly-Clerc, curate of St. Nizier, in his last sermon informed his parishioners, that for



the future no public worship could be permitted, and *that* knowing the catechism was sufficient. This detestable priest fled during the siege to Dubois-Crancé, re-entered the town with him, and has just placed the bust of the infamous Chalier on the altar of his church.

“ All the accounts which the newspapers have given of the festival celebrated in honour of this ci-devant school-master are erroneous. The following is an *authentic* description of this farce :

“ On the 10th instant, all the constituted authorities, the revolutionary tribunal, the troops of the line, &c. repaired with an Ass to the town-house. There this animal was decked with the stole, and all the other superb sacerdotal ornaments which the count de Maubourg had made a present of to the cathedral. On his head was put the beautiful mitre of the bishop Lamourette; on his back were tied the holy vessels, and to his tail a mass-book. He was decorated with the inscription, “ *Restes de Fanaticism*”, remains of Fanaticism. Thus equipped, the ass was led in procession through the whole town, preceded by the department and a detachment of horse, and followed by a band of music and some infantry. By his side marched two Sans Culottes, holding a calix (sacred cup) out of which the animal drank

now and then, and two other Sans Culottes perfumed him with frankincense. The Municipality, the Tribunals, the Clubists, and women clad in white, closed the procession. Having arrived at the Place de Bellecour, they piled up church pictures, books of devotion, bibles, mass-books, and such church ornaments as would fetch no money when exposed to sale, and burnt the Afs, books, &c. &c. under the most horrid shouts, "*Vive les Sans Culottes.*"

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION,

*Sitting of Nov. 29, 1793.*

The curate of the town of Aigle, in Normandy abjured the worship of folly and fanaticism, for that of reason. [*Applauded.*]

At Issoire, in Auvergne, all the ci-devant saints have been burnt, in the presence of the representative Couthon. [*Applauded.*]

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION,

*Saturday Nov. 30, concluded.*

A deputation from the department of L'Arriege complained, that their canton had been flated to contain very few patriots. The orator, having justified and proved the civism of his department, demanded justice.

The Convention decreed, that the whole ad-

dress be inserted in their minutes, with honourable mention.

The pupils of the new republican school of the *section des Arcis* appeared at the bar, and one of them made a long speech, which was crowned with applause. He set forth, that all religious worship had been suppressed in his section even to the very idea of religion. He added, that he and his school-fellows detested God! that they fraternized with Jews, Mahometans, Protestants, and persons of every sect; that instead of going to mass, they performed the manual exercise; and that instead of learning Scripture, they learned the Declaration of Rights, and made the Constitution their Catechism.

The president having expressed to this deputation the satisfaction of the Convention, they were admitted to the honours of the sitting, and received the kiss of fraternity, amidst the loudest applause.

Paris, Dec. 1, 1793.

The representatives of the people at the western army have informed the Convention, that 90 non-juring priests, who were confined in a boat on the Loire, died on the water. It appears to be a new mode of *Septemberising*, without shedding blood, thereby avoiding to excite the commiseration of feeling minds at so dreadful a sight.



NATIONAL CONVENTION, Dec. 6, 1793.

I. The National Convention forbids all violence and menaces against the freedom of religious worship.

II. The vigilance of the constituted authorities and the activity of the public force shall be exerted to this end; and shall employ all the means that may be necessary to give security to the religious worship of all persuasions.

*Sitting of the Jacobins, Dec. 11, 1793.*

I neither think it wise nor prudent, (said a member) to extinguish the idea of God in the minds of the people. For my part I here make my profession of faith, and I declare that I believe in the existence of a God. This declaration was received with the loudest applause, and every member rising up exclaimed, yes we all believe in God.

NATIONAL CONVENTION, Dec. 11, 1793.

The society of mountaineers of Foix sent an address to the president of the Convention, to notify that their town *had destroyed every object belonging to religious worship, and converted their principal church into a temple consecrated to reason*; that the metals having been likewise carried off, the brass would be sent to the representatives

at Toulouse to cast cannon, and the iron to the districts. The ornaments are to serve to cloath the poor, and the silver will be immediately forwarded to the Convention.

In the Courier Universel (one of the most popular papers at Paris) 29th Frimaire (Dec. 19), 1793, it is maintained, " That provided *the idea of a Supreme Being be nothing more than a philosophical abstraction*, a guide to the imagination in the pursuit of causes and effects, a resting place for the curiosity of enquiring minds, a notion merely speculative, and from which *no practical consequences are to be applied to human life*, there is *no great danger in such an idea*: but if it is to be made the foundation of morality; if it is to be accompanied by the supposition that there exists a God, who presides over the affairs of the world, and rewards or punishes men for their actions on earth, according to some principle of retributive justice, *there can be no opinion more prejudicial to the interests of society*. The idea of a Supreme Being, it is affirmed, is a *despotic* idea, and must be so at all times; mankind can never be liberated, or republicanised, so long as they shall preserve such a notion. Those beings who adore an invisible master, will easily believe that he may accomplish his ends by earthly agents; and reasoning by ana-

logy they must conclude the necessity of some system of ranks and orders of society, and finally of some regular government among mankind; and thus the servitude of the understanding will enslave every moral and political principle."

Dec. 16, 1793.

In the Jacobin Club. Roberspierre says, "The nobles have often been compared with the priests, and the turn of the balance has always been in favour of the former. I, however, for my own part, am by no means of this opinion; I hold the noblesse to be much more dangerous than the clergy.

"Do you not perceive, that, by adopting *at present* too rigorous measures against the clergy, you really serve the purposes of those who conspire against the happiness and liberty of the republic? Are you ignorant, that in the eyes of Europe, we are constantly pictured as impious deists and atheists? Will you justify this calumny? Do you not know, that patriots have been massacred, because they attempted *too violent a blow* against religious worship? In a critical moment, *wisdom and politics* enjoin us to spare the priests, *whom otherwise, I no more esteem and respect than you do.*

In my opinion, we should, therefore, fix a



watchful eye on all priests, and demand of them stronger proofs of civism than from others; but we should not exclude them. Adopted.

### NATIONAL CONVENTION,

*Evening Sitting, Dec. 21, 1793.*

Some citizens of both sexes solicited a decree for preventing any person being persecuted for religious opinions. Passed to the order of the day.

### MUNICIPALITY OF PARIS, *Dec. 30, 1793.*

After a long speech by Chaumet, on the liberty of religious worship, the council of the commons resolved, that they will not listen to any petition, proposal, or motion relative to any form of worship, or religious subject; that the exercise of public worship being free, they never could think to prevent citizens from hiring houses, and paying their clergy for any form of worship whatsoever, provided it be not prejudicial to society; *that they shall always cause the will of such sections to be respected, which have renounced all religious worship, except that of Reason, Liberty, and the Republican virtues.*

The council charged Chaumet to present the members with a syllabus of the *civic festival* to be celebrated at the end of every month; and or-

dered two spacious tribunes to be erected where these festivals are to be celebrated, with the following inscription: *Respect to Old Men*. The other for pregnant women, with this inscription: *Respect to Pregnant Women, the Hope of the Country*.

At the same sitting, a letter was read amidst the applause of the galleries, written by Colombeau, who mentions *that at Nancy every kind of religious worship is abolished; that every object which could recal religion to the imagination was destroyed, and that all the churches were shut*.

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The foregoing authentic documents, which come down to the end of the last year, are only a few out of a great number of the same kind, which are to be found in all the French papers of the best authority, more particularly from the middle of October 1793, to January 1794\*. And if to these we add the public canonization, or apotheosis of Mr. Voltaire; the abolition of the *Christian Æra* by the substitution of the *year of the Republic* for the *year of our Lord*; the tacit suppression of the Christian sabbath (and of course probably Christian worship) throughout the coun-

\* See Lord Mornington's admirable speech in the House of Commons, Jan. 21, 1794. From Page 73 to 93.

try, by dividing the month into periods of *ten* days instead of *seven*; the established form of taking an oath, by saying simply *I swear\**, without ever mentioning the name of God; and finally the encouragement given to the doctrine that *death is an everlasting sleep*; the reader will then be in possession of most of the material facts that will enable him to form a true judgment of the religious opinions of the French government at least, if not of the French people at large.

\* See Page 18.

F I N I S.